DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 178 535 SP 015 070

AUTHOR Kelton, Beverly A.
TITLE Staff Development: More Than Improving Teaching?
INSTITUTION Office of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C. Teacher Corps.
PUB DATE 79
NOTE 10p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Educational Resources; *Improvement Programs; Inservice Programs; *Needs Assessment; *Problem Solving; *Program Development; School Community Relationship; School Environment; Staff Improvement; *Teamwork

ABSTRACT

The described inservice program was designed to bring together teachers to collectively address overall school problems. The project was based upon the belief that school improvements could be best effected by providing teachers the opportunity to actively participate in the design and implementation of changes in school functioning. Emphasis was placed on helping the staff acquire skills in problem solving, goal setting, decision making, planning, information gathering, problem analysis, and resource identification. An example is given of a team of teachers who identified specific problems encountered by regular class teachers in dealing with mainstreamed students. Their recommendations are outlined, and subsequent improvement of the situation is described. (JD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED178535

New England Teacher Corps Network
Connecticut • Maine • Massachusetts • New Hampshire • Rhode Island • Vermont

STAFF DEVELOPMENT: MORE THAN IMPROVING TEACHING?

Beverly A. Kelton, Director
Hartford Public Schools/University of Hartford Teacher Corps Project

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

Submitted by:

New England Teacher Corps Network
PO Box 1065
Portsmouth, NH 03801

Sara R. Massey, Executive Secretary

SP015070

STAFF DEVELOPMENT: MORE THAN IMPROVING TEACHING?

Beverly A. Kelton, Director
Hartford Public Schools/University of Hartford Teacher Corps Project

Inservice programs have traditionally been viewed as vehicles by which the professionals in a school system can improve their instructional and managerial skills and perhaps provide opportunities for personal growth as well. Palmer (1978, p. 215) states that for teachers "most inservice programs fall into a category that may be called improvements of teaching. This category includes efforts to revise and upgrade content knowledge in the areas of their specialities as well as efforts to provide them with skills to increase their effectiveness in the teaching/learning situation." However, Edelfelt (1979, p. 9) indicates that "school program improvements as a task for inservice education is beginning to surface in American schools." He also suggests that "curriculum development and inservice education must become so integrated that they are indistinguishable (Edelfelt, 1979, p. 9)." Similarly, Howey and Bents (1979, p. 27) have identified as one of the goals of inservice education "altering environmental (school) conditions which impinge upon teaching effectiveness."

Such goals or purposes for inservice education have significant implications for the ways in which we view the school's culture and organization and the ways in which we design and deliver inservice programs. An inservice program that included such goals would, of necessity, have to address the ways in which staff could be effective

involved in the planning and decision-making for school improvement. The Hartford Teacher Corps Project wanted to deliver a program that could improve the teaching skills of the site school staff, but also a program that could help the staff develop skills in addressing the problems of the school. We wanted to encourage the teachers participating in our program to assume active roles as planners and deliverers of their own staff development program.

The project was based upon the belief that school improvements could be best effected by providing teachers the opportunity to actively participate in the design and implementation of the program. We believe that staff development programs that have a strong "participating base offer teachers a unique source of professional recognition and personal satisfaction" and that such programs "permit teachers to develop their leadership skills and to share with their colleagues (Furey, 1978, p. 196)."

Speiker (1978) states that teachers will probably achieve greater benefits from a staff development program that is tied to general efforts of the school. Wilson (1978, p. 276) suggests that "much of school success is best achieved through people working together rather than in isolation," and Dale Mann has frequently cited the importance of designing user-driven systems to effect significant and lasting change.

It seemed appropriate then to direct our energies toward developing collegial teams that could work together to examine the

school's climate, its programs, organization and relationship to and with the community. We wanted these teams to be able to identify problems as the staff perceived them and to be able to develop strategies that might effectively lead toward problem resolution. Although we wanted to provide assistance for dealing with the immediate concerns of the school staff, our long range efforts were directed toward (1) helping the staff acquire skills in problem solving; (2) providing ample practice in the utilization of those skills; and (3) establishing a norm for the involvement of the staff in school improvement efforts. The skills which we considered vital to the problem solving process were; goal setting, decision-making, planning, information gathering, problem analysis, and resource identification.

School improvement activities generally result from some identification of needs. Typical of other Teacher Corps projects, we administered a needs assessment survey in the first year of our project. The areas addressed in the needs assessment were drawn from school system priorities, general concerns expressed by administrators, teachers and community members and from an analysis of test score data. We followed this with individual interviews with a sample of the school staff. We know that in some instances the processes and procedures employed to identify needs can result in misleading data and present symptoms rather than basic causes. Hamil (1977, p. 7) has suggested that "it is difficult to identify

problems. It is easier to look at superficial evidence of problems -- rather than causes." Bishop (1977, pp. 28-29) states that "indicators of problems are neither causes nor solutions..." It seems clear that the data gathered from most needs assessments needs to be validated in some way. The identification and validation of needs then leads to the development of program objectives and to program design.

Staff of the project school were first invited to participate as members of several Planning/Study Teams to assist us in validating the needs that had been identified. We wanted to ensure that all were indeed addressing real needs and not causes or solutions. In addition to validating the identified needs through further data collection, interviews and in-depth study, the Teams were to make recommendations for addressing those needs. A facilitator from either the faculty or the College of Education or the school system staff was identified to work with each Planning/Study Team.

Later, Work/Study Teams were formed to follow-up on the work of the Planning/Study Teams. School staff were again invited to participate on these Teams which were either facilitated by faculty members, school system personnel or staff members themselves. The Work/Study Teams attempted to deal directly with the problems and needs identified by the Planning/Study Teams. Figure 1 depicts the sequence of activities and the groups or individuals primarily

responsible for carrying them out. The Work/Study Teams attempted to take the problems identified by the Planning Team and (1) determine the requirements for a solution, (2) identify solution alternatives, and (3) select solution strategies from the alternatives identified (Kaugman, 1972).

Our experiences in Hartford have confirmed for us the viability of a staff development program that has as one of its focuses, the involvement of teachers as problem-solvers. The teams approached their problem solving tasks with enthusiasm, but also with some skepticism. They were not convinced that they would indeed have the power to make decisions that would impact upon the school. Working together as a group to address issues and concerns that had previously been talked about only among individual teachers with little hope of effecting change was a new experience.

The teams were able to organize their team meetings and meetings with other school staff in order to share their progress and to obtain feedback. Other staff members were extremely receptive to the presentations and staff meetings that were planned and carried out by the Teams. As they arrived at possible solutions to problems, the Teams were most careful to keep the total staff informed and to seek consensus on the solutions.

We found that Teams of school staff working together to improve the school frequently identified inservice programs that would improve their teaching and managerial skills as appropriate

activities. They requested specific courses, workshops and seminars that would up-grade their teaching skills; increase their knowledge about children, about content, about learning, and about the school community.

One of the most successful Planning/Study Teams was one that focused on the exceptional child in the school setting. This Team identified several problems that revolved around the ways in which children with special needs who attended the school were being serviced. These included:

-- regular classroom teachers' limited understanding of the role of the special education resource teacher.

-- regular classroom teachers' lack of knowledge about children with special needs.

-- staff's inadequate knowledge of P.O. 94-142.

-- insufficient coordination between regular classroom teachers and special education teachers and special subject teachers and special education teachers.

-- limited opportunities for special subject teachers to meet with parents during scheduled parent conference periods.

The Work/Study Team worked for a period of several months to develop a series of strategies or activities to address these problems. Their solutions included:

-- offering two courses; the Psychology of the Exceptional Child and Introduction to Learning Disabilities.

-- conducting a series of exchane meetings between the special education staff and regular classroom teachers and special subject teachers.

-- holding a workshop for the staff on P.L. 94-142

-- re-designing the system for scheduling special education students in regular classrooms and for resource services.

-- designing a procedure to include special education teachers in parent conferences.

It is important to note the very critical role of the school administration in staff development for school improvement. The administration must be committed to these efforts, supportive and willing to share power and decision-making. The several Teams varied in their leves of success, but our experiences have confirmed our belief that staff development can be more than the improvement of specific teaching and managerial skills.

REFERENCES

Bishop, L. Staff Development and Instructional Improvement: Plans and Procedures. Boston; Allyn and Bacon, Inc. 1976.

Edelfelt, R. "Inservice Teacher Education: A Concept, An Overview." Inservice National Council of States on Inservice Education Newsletter. April, 1979. pp. 4-11, 15.

Furey, A. "Participation and Personal Growth: Keys to Staff Development." In L. Rubin (Ed.), The In-Service Education of Teachers; Trends, Processes, and Prescriptions. Boston; Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1978.

Hamil, T. "What's Bugging You? Finding the Problem." In Iambic Inservice. Sara Massey (ed.), Durham, NH: New England Teacher Corps Network, 1977.

Howey, K. and Bents, R. "Alternative Strategies for the Delivery of Inservice." Inservice, National Council of States on Inservice Education Newsletter. April, 1979. pp. 27-28, 32-35.

Kaufman, R. Educational System Planning. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1972.

Palmer, T. "In-Service Education: Intrinsic Versus Extrinsic Materialism." In L. Rubin.

Speiker, C. "Do Staff Development Practices Make A Difference?" In L. Rubin.

Wilson, Shiela. "Career-Long Staff Development: An Educational Necessity." In L. Rubin.